

# Brighton & Lewes Beekeepers Newsletter



October 2017

Editor: Norman Dickinson

BRIGHTON AND LEWES DIVISION OF THE SUSSEX BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION  
[www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk](http://www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk)

## First winter meeting

**Wednesday 27th September - The Inspector Calls with David Rudland**

## Grassroots Meeting 10th September. Report by Amanda Millar

Considering the dire forecast there was a good turnout for the last out apiary meeting of the year; although overcast and windy it did not actually rain on us until just a few were left clearing up.

The topic was winter preparation and we looked through the first hive thoroughly, checking the health and quantity of brood and that there were all stages from egg, open larvae to sealed brood. It had been shook swarmed in the spring because it had had a number of problems last year. The brood was still slightly patchy and one early stage chalk mummy, partly removed, was found. This was probably a good sign that they were keeping on top of the problem. Three Deformed Wing Virus (DWV) bees were seen and removed. The queen was also seen and the boxes were completely full of bees.

Icing sugar dusting was demonstrated and 30 minutes later 93 mites had fallen through on to the insert. After its shook swarm it had built up to a brood and a half which it will be wintering with. In early August it was deemed to have plenty of stores to last the varroa treatment (dusting only) but as there was so little nectar income in August they had eaten most of that and only had 3lbs left so a large plastic rapid feeder was fitted and they were given 6kg sugar syrup which would convert to 15lbs stores. Other things to consider were a clean floor, it had this year's comb throughout, the boxes were sound and had no gaps, the entrance block was reduced to about 4cm by a piece of sponge to help defend against a lot of wasps around and a wasp trap was put out.

The other three colonies were also checked for brood, eggs, stores and hive and brood condition but more swiftly because there was a black cloud hovering not far away. On one the frames from one old Commercial super were carefully transferred to a clean repaired super to remove a gap between boxes, only to find the gap was the fault of the super below! A job for next week. One colony had the remains of Apiguard on and had dropped nearly 400 mites in the previous, fourth week of treatment, which was disappointing. They have now dropped over 4000 mites during the Apiguard treatment to date. Further dusting will be required when they have finished the Apiguard tray. So we were not surprised to see several bees with DWV. The other three colonies dropped about 100 mites each; half the mites they had dropped last week so progress is at last being made on them.

Finally we inspected the capture tray of an Apishield box put under one hive the week before ( see beekeeping notes for result). The crowd quickly thinned after that and migrated toward the tea table where there must have been a very tasty cake as only crumbs remained, but Philip had saved me a sample of his variation of an ice cream cone - a cone filled with creamed rice and topped with fresh raspberries, yummy!

*A big thanks goes to all those members who turned up on 27th August to help clearing weeds and hedge trimming, including yours truly who got stung right at the end having removed my bee suite. Stupid Boy Pike! Ed.*

## Amanda

Feeding syrup should be completed by now, this is so the bees have time before the weather becomes colder, to reduce the moisture in it as they would with nectar so it will keep over winter. If they still do not have what they need, I expect that 2:1 syrup or invert syrup is still better than anything else such as fondant, until the weather falls consistently below 14°C, at which point they go into a cluster. The exception might be nuclei which are sometime slow to take sufficient stores. I am concerned by the number of inexperienced beekeepers I have spoken to recently who have not fed or not treated for mites even late in September. These colonies are less likely to survive the winter. Mite treatments should have finished by mid September if healthy winter bees are to develop, but do check the drop after the treatment has been removed, or do an icing sugar check this month. A couple of mine which had had Apiguard, still dropped 200 mites after dusting a week later. This may have been the remaining effect of the Apiguard though as it was much lower a week later. This month I normally receive a varroa 'bomb' as nearby untreated colonies collapse, necessitating a second round of dusting so I have to be vigilant.

In August I put one of Vita's Apishield boxes under one of the Divisional out apiary hives. In early September after a week in place we inspected the capture tray. There were about 30-40 wasps dead and alive in it (but no noticeable reduction in the many wasps flying around the hives) and sadly a small number of bees, presumably robbers from another colony or maybe guard bees from that colony, which I feared may happen. As suggested in a recent BBKA News, I had put the box under the normal floor, blocking off the Apishield front entrance, so I could continue to carry out icing sugar dusting. An update from Vita suggests that one Apishield per apiary, on the weakest colony should be sufficient, and left on between August and November. I am glad I can remove it in November when the risk of hornets etc has gone, as there is a build up of debris in it which would be a haven for wax moth. Of course the main purpose is to catch any Asian Hornets which may attack; so it remains to be seen how effective it is when they turn up.

Because of an outbreak of Greater wax moth in my garage last month, I froze all the supers removed from my colonies as a precaution. Where they all pupated, usually together, I have yet to find in spite of going through all my stacks of hive equipment. Half way through freezing the supers I discovered that frames of just foundation shattered in the freezer, but drawn comb seemed fine, so will have to recycle these frames. Female wax moths give off a distinctive and not unpleasant pheromone to attract males, I discovered. After a bit, I had only to stick my head into the garage to know whether a female was out fanning. They mostly went to the window in the evening so were relatively easy to swat. I hope I got them all.

In spite of leaving most of my colonies with nearly a super full of honey at the beginning of August, I discovered at my final brood/queen/health/stores check in the first week of September, that many had consumed a lot of this. There must have been little or no nectar around in August. A couple were



down to 4 lbs of stores, but one big colony still had 30lbs, so a bit difficult to predict but the moral is be vigilant and check regularly. At my final check I first hefted the supers and estimated the stores, then quickly counted the exact amount on each frame. I was pleased that I was usually within 1-2 lbs by either method. This gave me confidence when I came to a grumpy colony that I could just lift each box and then throw it back together and run. The day after the light ones had a rapid feeder put on, nearly every bee came home laden with orange ragwort or pale balsam pollen. (see photo) Feeding will have triggered a brood expansion. All the colonies had some sealed brood, and plenty of eggs but few larvae so the workers were restricting the brood because of the lack of incoming nectar. This new brood will develop in a low mite environment now and I hope will be healthy winter bees which will survive until March. When you have given them all the syrup they need and removed the feeders heft the hive again so you get a feel of its weight and have something to compare with later in the winter. In my final check I also noted the colour of the comb and those with dark comb will be shook swarmed in the spring. I suspect several will move up into the supers, of which I have left them two in some cases (brood and a half plus super of honey/stores) and it will be a simple matter of removing the old abandoned brood box in the spring. It's much easier and less stressful for them than shook swarming; I will then continue to run the colony on supers; uniform frame size and lighter to lift. Also easier to inspect for queen cells which they often put on the bottom bars of supers.

Now is the time to sterilise supers with acetic acid if there is a chance they will go onto different colonies next year and do any maintenance; repairing gaps etc. if required, and cleaning everything up ready for next year. Put on mouse guards, insulation, netting against woodpeckers if they are a problem and strap or put weights on the lids of hives in exposed areas. Don't forget to check the entrances are clear on a regular basis. Then process that recycled wax to make candles in time for Christmas, rack your mead, make your cosmetics, get your best honey ready for show and generally enjoy the products of your (and the bees') labours this year. Don't forget to book your place at the SBKA Convention on 25th November at Uckfield.



## B&L Annual BBQ at Heather's

The annual B&L BBQ and get together was again held at Heather's bungalow in Newick and was well attended by about 26 members and their long suffering partners. We all started to assemble from about 12 noon, those arriving early being seconded to help out as appropriate. Although it was inevitable that some talk was about the bees and beekeeping, our partners ensured that the topics were wide and varied and generally steered the conversation away from bees.

Heather put on a splendid spread of food, which was most varied and nutritional, well some of it, as the deserts were sure to put the pounds on. Mention must go to Ken Istead who did an excellent job looking after the BBQ and cooking the food, which was most delicious.

Whilst the weather started warm but slightly overcast, remaining so for most of the afternoon however light rain finally made itself felt (pardon the pun) and all adjourned indoors with the inevitable migration to the kitchen by some whilst others just parked their backsides in the living room.

A most pleasant afternoon was had by all with a special thanks thanks going to Heather and Ron for hosting this now annual event.



*Photos by Bob Curtis*





## Photo Corner



Bees with ragwort pollen pouring in, in response to first feed in early September. Entrance (5.5mm high) reduced right down with sponge to help defend against wasps and wine!

***Photo by Amanda Millar***



More from the BBQ. Ken is doing a sterling job with the cooking and Ian looks like he is sleepwalking with his eyes closed, or is it the after affect of the wine!

***Photos by Bob Curtis***



# Changing of the Guard, Bee-Style by Ben Huberman



The death of a monarch is never simple. There's a vacuum of power that needs to be filled, an anxiety of influence that requires the successor to establish their power quickly, and a challenging period in which the memory of the deceased is negotiated and shaped (in some cases — hello, French Revolution! — this phase can last centuries). In a lovely essay at *Nautilus*, *Well worth a read* Ed. John Knight explores the war of succession that followed the death of the original queen in his Brooklyn-rooftop beehive. It's a conflict not just between a wannabe-queen and her reluctant subjects, but also between human and insect, each following their own complex protocols for survival.

As far as I can tell, my queen died sometime in the spring. Queens typically live for about four or five years, so this caught me by surprise. A new queen, however, is a regular event in the life of a hive. Beekeepers frequently replace their queens every year or two to introduce genetic variety and ensure that the hive has a strong monarch who can lay enough eggs to keep the population up. Bees can also raise their own queen, and when I did an inspection early that spring, I was pleased to see that mine had taken the initiative. Before she died, my old queen must have laid a few fertilized eggs that worker bees raised as replacements. They

would have selected six or seven fertilized (female) eggs and fed them only royal jelly. When the first queen hatched, she would have immediately killed any unhatched competition and ideally flown a few mating flights, storing enough semen in her abdomen to spend the rest of her life laying eggs. While a newborn queen may seem ruthless, the success of a beehive hinges on allegiance to its queen. Though she can mate with an average of 12 different drones, there is only one queen, which makes for a hive of closely related bees. As a new queen begins to produce her own pheromones, the hive slowly aligns with her as the old bees die and new workers hatch. In a sense, the hive is genetically wired to be loyal to the monarchy. If the hive was to raise multiple queens, or if the workers were to start laying eggs, the interests of the population would slowly fracture.

In a healthy hive, a queen will lay hundreds, sometimes thousands of eggs each day in spring and summer, which she either fertilizes or doesn't. The fertilized eggs, the females, can either grow to be workers or queens. The unfertilized eggs become male drones that do nothing but inseminate the queen—quite literally, flying bags of semen. Drone bees, though crucial for reproduction, don't forage or sting or raise brood—they can't even feed themselves.

## SBKA Annual Convention

The annual Sussex Beekeepers Association Annual Convention will once again be held at the Uckfield Civic Centre on Saturday, 25th November 2017. This year we have six excellent speakers covering a wide range of subjects, some of which are bound to be of interest. The confirmed programme is as follows:

9:00am	Registration and coffee	
9:30am	Dr John Feltwell	Dealing with the Asian Hornet
10:30am	Break	
10:50am	Roger Patterson	My Simple Approach to Bee Improvement
11:50am	Mike Williams	The Bee Sting and its effect on Humans
1:00pm	Lunch	
2:00pm	Nikki Gammans	Gardening for Bees and other Insect Pollinators
3:00pm	Break	
3:20pm	Bob Smith	Managing the Workers
4:30pm	Close	

Please note that timings may be subject to change.

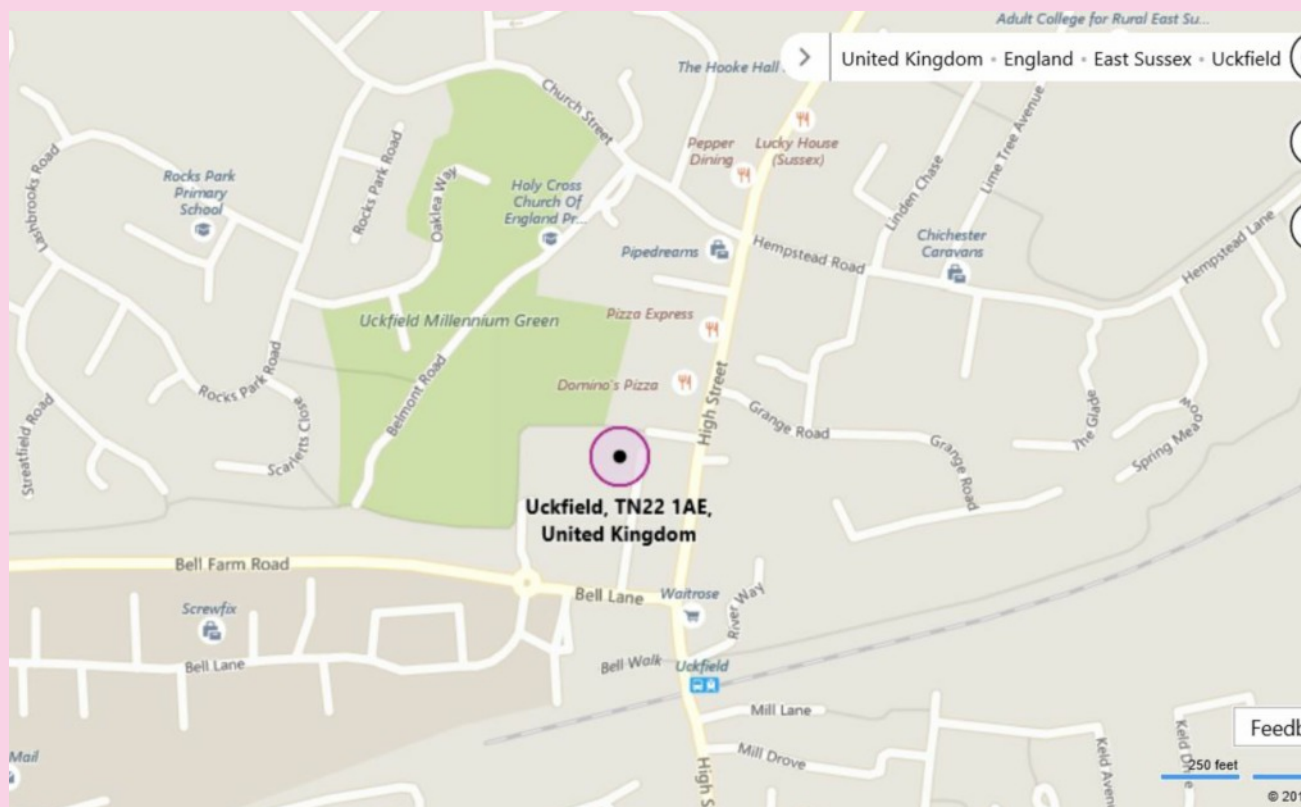
The cost of attending the Convention is £25 and includes a Buffet Lunch.

If you wish to book please telephone the SBKA Treasurer on 01424 838302 or email [info@sbkaconvention.org.uk](mailto:info@sbkaconvention.org.uk) with the subject line Convention Booking. Please include your name, email address and postal address. If you have any special dietary requirements please include this as well. The Treasurer will email you with payment details. Payment is accepted via PayPal, BACS and cheque's.

In previous years, Northern Books have been present selling a wide range of titles covering just about everything to do with bees together with other interesting subjects, however we have not yet received confirmation that they will be attending this year. An announcement will be made in a later edition of this newsletter once confirmation is received.

The Civic Centre is located in Bellfarm Lane, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 1AE and there is ample car parking available, just ensure that you park in the upper long stay parking area.

Link to Uckfield Civic Centre - <http://www.uckfieldciviccentre.com>



# Reminders . . . . .

There is still time to enter your honey and other bee and products of the hive related items into the 86th National Honey Show at Sandown Park 26th to 28th October. Please note that the entries for essays, videos, microscope slides and photographs is now closed with no late entry permitted.

There are also a series of workshops, lectures and trade stands which will be of interest to all.

Full details, including the Show Schedule, Entry Forms and Admission charges can be found on the NHS website at <http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/> Details were also published in the B&L August Newsletter. Worth noting that the Show Schedule also gives invaluable information on what the judges are looking for in the Guidance for Exhibitors section along with much more general information and advice. This will assist those members who intend to show their products at the B&L AGM on 17th January 2018.

Don't forget that the SBKA Annual Convention takes place on Saturday, 25th November at the Uckfield Civic Centre. Full details were given in the September edition of the B&L Newsletter. Details of the event can be found at <https://sussexbeeorguk.wordpress.com/convention/> together with the various methods of registering, I can recommend using PayPal for ease of use.

Thoughts should now be turning to the Brighton and Lewes AGM and annual Honey Show, scheduled for Wednesday, 17th January 2018 at the Cliffe church hall in Lewes. A full schedule for the Honey Show will be issued ahead of the event, but in the meantime a little forward planning will not go amiss. A good starting point will be reference to the National Honey Show schedule, here you will find information on staging your exhibits and recommended standard for a jar of honey. After the business of the AGM and whilst waiting for the judging of the Honey Show to be finalised, Amanda will present a general knowledge quiz aimed at the beekeeper. This is normally a fun quiz, although as beekeepers we all have our own ideas and sometimes the answers do tend to be controversial. Whether you are a beginner/novice or more experienced bee keeper, high scores or low scorer, we all learn from this, and that is partly what the B&L Division is all about, to increase our collective knowledge on beekeeping.

As at all winter meeting, the B&L book library will be available for members to borrow any book in the collection. A fully refundable deposit of £5 will be required for each book and the normal loan period is up to three months. A full list of books currently available can be found on the B&L website at this link

[http://www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/SBKA\\_BandLD\\_Library\\_Nov2015.pdf](http://www.brightonlewesbeekeepers.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/SBKA_BandLD_Library_Nov2015.pdf)

If a particular title is not available then a request can be made to the Committee to order that book, however it will be the Committees decision whether or not purchase it.

## B&L Vacancies

We still have the B&L Librarian position vacant and invite members to apply for this. In the first instance please contact Ian White, details on the back page of this newsletter.

Heather McNiven has expressed a desire to step down as the Apiary Manager at Knowlands Farm in Barcombe as soon as a replacement can be found. This position is open to any B&L Member who can demonstrate that he/she has the necessary knowledge and experience to manage the out apiary. The successful applicant will be responsible for expanding the number of colonies to ensure a viable apiary for the future, will ensure that the colonies have healthy bees, will bottle the honey harvest for sale by the Division, and be prepared to run the summer out apiary meeting at Knowlands. Applicants should contact either Pat Clowser or Ian White for further details.



# Divisional Diary 2017/8

**Indoor Meetings:** 7:15 for 7:30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, October to March at Cliffe church hall, Lewes, unless otherwise stated. Members are invited to arrive early and assist in putting out chairs. Non-members are always welcome.

## Summer Programme

**Our summer programme of out apiary meetings will resume in the Spring of 2018**

## Winter Programme

### Indoor meetings

Wed 27th September: The Inspector Calls with David Rudland

Wed 18th October: The Asian Hornet with John Feltwell

Wed 15th November: Mead Making with Steve Gibson

Wed 17th Jan 2018: AGM followed by a quiz with Amanda and the B&L Annual Honey Show

Wed 21st Feb: The Effect of Bee Stings on Humans with Mike Williams

Wed 21st March: Skep Beekeeping with Chris Parks

## For your diary

~~Sat 5th August - Rottingdean Fair.~~

~~Sun 3rd Sept - Social BBQ at Heather McNiven's.~~

**26th to 28th Oct - 86th National Honey Show, Sandown Park Racecourse, KT10 9AJ.**

**Sat 25th November - Sussex Beekeepers' Association Annual Convention, Uckfield Civic Centre.**

**The Brighton and Lewes Division of the SBKA cannot accept any responsibility for loss, injury or damage sustained by persons in consequence of their participation in activities arranged.**

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### Education coordinator

Amanda Millar

### National Honey Show Representative

Norman Dickinson

### Committee Members

Sue Taylor, Gerald Legg, Heather McNiven, Mary King

## Contributions to your newsletter

Contributions, including photos, to the newsletter (max 900 words) can be sent, preferably by email, to the editor see panel above for details  
Photos etc. for the website should be emailed to our webmaster, see panel above.

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